

TEACHING CONVERSATION ANALYSIS

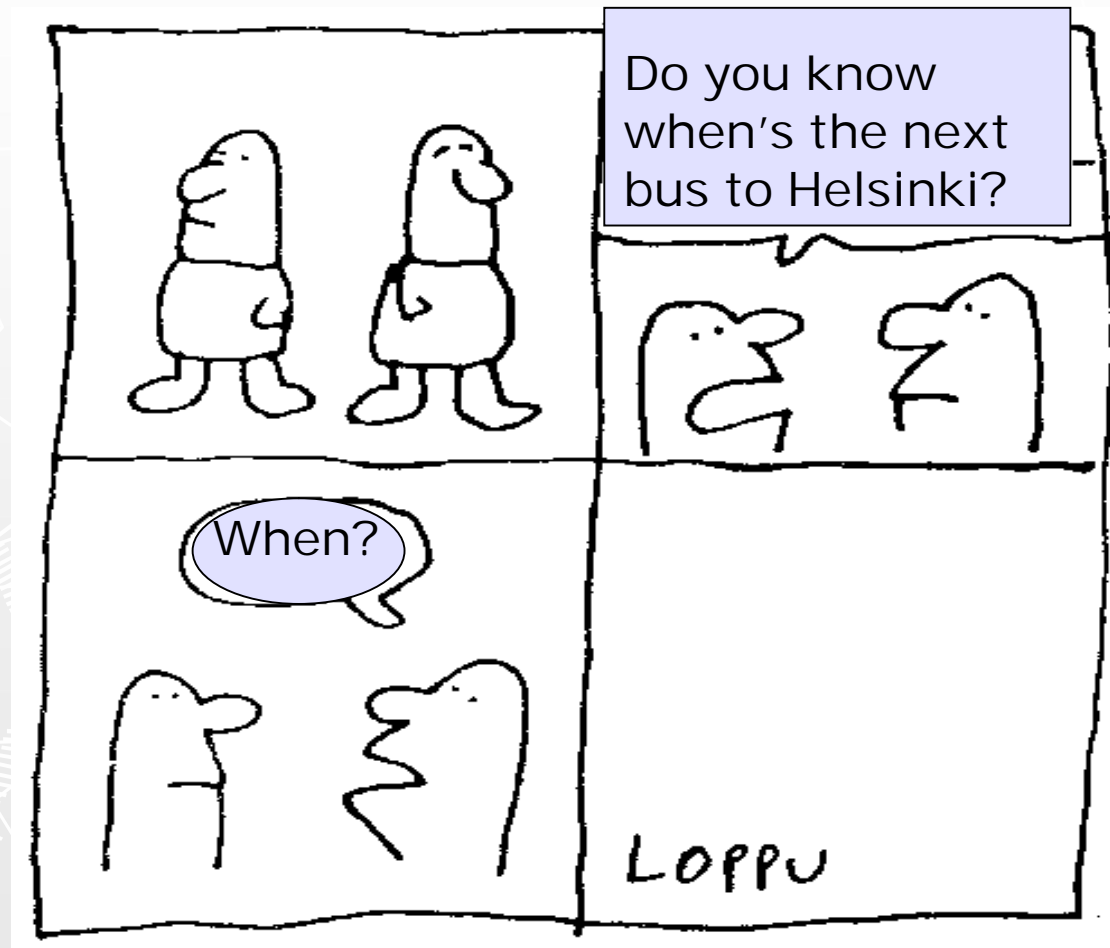
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At the bus stop (by Jukka Tilsa)



Structure of the presentation

- ▶ SETTING OF OUR TEACHING
- ▶ CHALLENGES OF RELEVANCE AND EXPLANATION
- ▶ CHALLENGE OF SKILL
- ▶ SUPERVISING A CA THESIS
- ▶ TEACHING TOGETHER

THE SETTING

- ▶ Courses 'Social interaction', 'interaction process' and 'conversation analysis'
- ▶ For BA and MA students
- ▶ Moodle learning environment
 - Distribution of video, audio, and textual material
 - Handing in, and commenting upon, assignments
 - Victor-system for video-online exercises
 - Possibility of solely internet-based course
- ▶ Combining different modes of working
 - Lecturing, data sessions in classroom, discussion in small groups, homework (data-analysis), readings, discussions on them in the net.
- ▶ Role of teaching assistants
- ▶ Co-teaching via internet video conferencing in two universities simultaneously

CHALLENGES OF RELEVANCE and EXPLANATION

- ▶ 'Core understandings' relevant in all CA research: turn-taking, sequence organization, maintenance of intersubjectivity through sequences (and repair), preference, participation framework.
- ▶ Problem to begin with: social science students have not come to the university to study social interaction in such detailed way (cf. Students in linguistics).
 - Sociology: 'Society' as whole, rather than 'interaction order', as their main interest.
 - Social Psychology: interaction but from cognitive intraindividual perspective
- ▶ Solution: spending much time in dealing with 'student recognizable' social science themes, using CA as a tool.
 - At the beginning rather than end part of the course.
 - Key themes (in different combinations in different courses): **emotion, epistemic relations**, control, **morality**, narration, body.

Morality as a CA theme

- ▶ In more traditional understanding, morality consists of two basic activities: problemsolving and resisting temptation → morality is seen as happening inside people's heads
 - Research by presenting ready made dilemmas in imagined contexts and examining reported grounds for the decisions made
- ▶ CA: morality in every move we make
 - Almost any utterance can be interpreted as morally loaded, including the assumption that as moral actors we are able to choose from a variety of actions: we are responsible for our actions (Bergmann)
 - Examples: puzzlement of not getting a greeting responded to, perceived rudeness of interrupting or disagreeing without hedges, laughter in doctor-patient interaction
- ▶ Exercise for students:

Extract 1

- ▶ P: this is a bit of an april fools visit and my wife got worried when in my right leg here, there came, very heavily, some blood, and it's now – how long is it now as you don't get an appointment immediately so but I still thought that I will show this and tell about to a doctor.

[14A2, bruises in the legs]

Extract 2

D: what seems to be the problem

P: well I've actually come here like because
of the girls (*meaning staff at work/JR*)
(pause) as this blood pressure of mine...
[25A3, low blood pressure]

Extract 3

D: what brings you here.

P: Last Thursday, I started to get a cold and I thought that it will pass. But then my throat started to ache and now there are the kind of boils or the kind of lumps.

[24A2, lumps in the throat]

What's common?

- ▶ I waited before coming
- ▶ I tried to use home remedies
- ▶ I have been responsible citizen in terms of taking care of my health
- ▶ I do not constantly pay excessive attention to my health
- ▶ Others sent me
 - Orientation to justification of visit
 - moral task of the patients in addition to giving information
 - patients' rights and obligations

Morality (continued)

- ▶ Linking CA themes to students' interests with e.g. personal-life assignments: observe a situation in your own everyday life where...
- ▶ In sum: comparison to more 'mainstream' ways of understanding morality highlights how meaning is created not only inside individual minds but also in interindividual reality, in interaction

Epistemic relations as a CA theme

- ▶ Power interests soc.science students → one avenue to observe power in interaction: Epistemic relations
- ▶ Key point to be delivered: the relation of the participants in terms of 'who knows what' and 'who is entitled to know what' is negotiated through their interaction, moment-by-moment.
 - And that negotiation can be made an object of study.

Epistemic relations (cont.)

- ▶ Sometimes we begin our course by asking the students to examine a segment of medical interaction, where they cannot fail to see the epistemic organization.
 - Extract 1 : *how* does the Dr yield to Mom's request.



Extract 1 (medical consultation)

01 Dr: .hh >but< what we'll do is that I'll now write the

02 reference to X-ray so,

03 (0.8)

04 Dr: .mt .hhh

05 Mom: would it be possible at the same time,

06 (0.4)

07 Mom: or would it be worthwhile to check the,

08 (0.2)

09 Mom: bronchial tubes (.) if it were there.

10 Dr: **to take a lung X-ray,**

11 Mom: yeah,

12 Dr: **well it is possible to take that at the same time**

13 **so one just tries to have as few of them**

14 **as possible so- so that there would not be**

15 **like many X-[rays]**

16 Mom: [yeah]

17 Dr: **>taken< but she presumably hasn't had**

18 **other than the,**

19 (0.2)

20 Dr: **sinus X ray taken then year and a half**

21 **[ago]**

22 Mom: [yes.]

23 Dr: **so n[ot,]**

24 Mom: [no.]

25 Dr: **any others.**

26 (.)

27 Mom: Yeah.

28 (0.4)

29 Dr: **so pneumoni[a has been quite common**

30 Pat: [hhh

31 Mom: =↑ yeah.

32 Dr: **=recently,**

33 (0.5)

34 Dr: **so,**

35 (0.6)

36 P: hhh

37 Dr: **so of course as the temperature has now risen,**

38 (.)

39 Mom: ↑ yeah.

40 Dr: **so (.) let's have that checked [at the same time °then°.]**

41 Mom: [yea:h,]

Epistemic relations (cont.)

- ▶ We can show how epistemic positions are systematically negotiated for example in the context of the delivery of the diagnosis.
 - Extracts from Peräkylä 1998



Diagnosis as plain assertion (Peräkylä 1998)

(1)

Dr: There's still an infection in the auditory canal

(2)

Dr: Here's (.) luckily the bone quite intact,

Diagnosis with explication of evidence (Peräkylä 1998)

(3)

((The doctor has just examined the patient's foot))

1 Dr: Okay:..h fine do put on your,

2 (.)

3 Dr:=> the pulse [can be felt there in your foot so,

4 P: [↑ Thank you.

5 -> .h there's no, in any case (.) no real circulation problem

...

8 Dr:-> is <involved>.

Epistemic relations (cont.)

- ▶ We can invite students to examine how arguments may start as a result from overstepping epistemic organization
 - Extract 2 (Ruusuvuori & Tiittula 2005)
 - The example shows how CA driven analyses of epistemic relations help to understand the process in which social psychological concepts such as *status* are formed

Research interview with company boss

IR: and the meetings of the steering group are in German
(.)

IE: they are in German
(0.8)

IR: mm (.) that is (.) probably very r(h)ar(h)e.
(0.5)

IE: is it.

IR: in Finland (.) I think (that) (2.2) it is almost like
[that a foreigner like

IE: [well you can't talk specifically much Finnish to Max
from Kohlmarkt

(Ruusuvuori & Tiittula 2005)

Epistemic relations (cont.)

- ▶ In sum: We seek to help the students to see a key dimension of power (involving both everyday and institutional relations) being incorporated and worked with, through the details of interaction.
- ▶ In investigating the ways in which the participants negotiate their epistemic statuses, the students also learn to pay attention to how adjacent utterances are related to each other.
 - ▶ E.g. Mother's request – Doctor's granting it in a particular way
 - ▶ E.g. Interviewer's suggestion – Boss' counter question launching an argument

Emotion as a CA theme

- ▶ Interactional generation of argument brings us to our third theme: emotion
- ▶ Key point: emotion is intertwined in interaction and is consequential for it: emotional displays are monitored and relevant next actions are performed in view of the preceding emotional display -- emotions may be felt but they are also expressed and responded to (every detail of interaction is potentially important)
- ▶ This can be displayed to students by examining a short segment of story-telling and facial expression following it, for example



B: In Savon
Sanomat they
had (0.7) not
in Savon
Sanomat but in
Satakunnan
Kansa
(0.4)

A: Mm//m



(0.4)

B: They had asked
Sami to wear proper
trousers //



(0.4)

A: W:(h)a:t//:.



Emotions (continued)

- ▶ through the theme of emotions we can point at the importance of the minute details of talk for meaning making
- ▶ The theme of emotion with the data on facial expression also shows the potential connection of CA analysis to various fields of study quite far from social science, for example neuroscience and mirror-neuron systems

CHALLENGE OF SKILL

- ▶ CA requires *specific skills* that are partly different from those in social science in general.
 - Social science: understanding abstract argumentation and statistical models
 - CA: making detailed observations on single instances of interaction and generalizations based on them
- ▶ Datasessions in classroom from the first day of the course.
 - Students tend to like them!
- ▶ Transcription exercise in early part of the course.
 - Great variance in first transcripts; everybody tends to learn.
- ▶ Exercises in data analysis through the course.
 - From general social science themes (emotion, epistemics etc.) towards more technical ones (TRPs, adjacency pairs, etc.)
 - Moodle & Victor very useful!

TEACHING TOGETHER

- ▶ Video-conference system: lecturing divided between teachers, data-sessions and discussions also locally
- ▶ challenges: distance, technical problems, scheduling
- ▶ advantages for teachers:
 - better quality of course
 - chance to discuss and develop
 - support in tricky issues
 - possibility to peer evaluation of own performance
- ▶ advantages for students:
 - two experts discussing builds enthusiasm and offers two 'ways of making sense' instead of one
 - chance to hear teachers disagreeing on something

SUPERVISING A CA THESIS

- ▶ Thesis based on CA requires specific kind of supervision.
- ▶ "You cannot learn CA on your own"?
- ▶ Frequency of supervisory sessions
 - Once in 7-14 days.
 - Why? -you can go easily astray?
- ▶ Labor in commenting upon students' papers
 - Focus not (only) on the general argument but (also) on details of data-analysis.
- ▶ Writing papers together as part of the thesis process
- ▶ Frequent data sessions
 - Helsinki: weekly session where the doctoral students' (plus Anssi's) data are examined.
 - Tampere: data-sessions once in two weeks + individual data-sessions with teacher
 - Joy of analytical work!

Institutional interaction

- ▶ One of the things we want the students to learn: generic practices of interaction are modified when they are in the service of institutional goals, such as assessment of applicants in employment interviews



